



*THE*  
**BLACK LEGION**  
*RIDES*

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**GEORGE MORRIS**

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# The Black Legion Rides

By GEORGE MORRIS

I.

## THE "TRIGGER MAN" ACTS

THE meeting at Findlater Temple broke up. The men quickly formed into squads and rushed into cars for the "night ride".

Two of the cars, in advance of the others, reached a dark, lonely spot on Dix Road on the outskirts of Detroit. The other cars were apparently delayed by the opening of the River Rouge bridge. Seven occupants of the cars jumped out and went into a huddle. They spoke in low tones and repeatedly turned to look back on the road to see if other cars were coming. Their special concern was a car with black robes, hoods and rope required for a "necktie party". For that is what it was to be.

"Well, I guess they must have got lost", said "Colonel" Harvey Davis, a tall, lanky, rat-faced creature. Then, turning to a short, stocky member of the party, he commanded: "Dean, get Poole out."

Dean instantly drew two revolvers and stepped toward one of the cars.

"Poole, come out of that car!" he said.

A young man emerged and soon found himself in a circle of seven men.

"Poole, you have beaten your wife for the last time", said the "Colonel". "She is in a hospital now with a broken rib."

"You have me wrong," Poole protested. "I never beat her. She is in a hospital having a baby."

The "Colonel" motioned to Dean. Dean promptly pumped five bullets into Poole out of his .45 automatic and three out of his .38. Urban Lee followed with three more shots. Charles Poole, the young P.W.A. worker, without a murmur, sank down, and rolled over into a ditch, stone dead.



The men piled into their cars and drove off. In the city they stepped into a beer garden and drank to a good night's work. After a warning from the "Colonel" to keep their mouths shut or "you'll get what Poole got", all scattered to their homes.

### The Black Legion Comes to Light

Ten days later, on May 22, 1936, the world was startled by as weird and horrible a story as was ever told. The Poole murder was only the latest outrage in a three-year trail of crimes by a secret organization of night riders called the Black Legion. They wore black robes and hoods adorned with a skull and cross-bones. From the bits of information that were squeezed out of the first sixteen arrested for the murder of Poole it was learned that the Black Legion was not just an "ordinary" organization of night riders. It seemed to incorporate all the features of the Ku Klux Klan—it was against Communists, Negroes, Catholics, Jews, and foreign-born, it was organized on a military plan, was active in industrial regions and had friends in high political places.

Murder and crime riddles left unsolved for years were recalled. Captain Ira H. Marmon, of the Michigan State Police, expressed his conviction that at least fifty unexplained "suicides" in the state were the work of this Black Legion. Floggings, murder, assassination plots, bombings of labor institutions, burning of homes and workers' camps, and faked leaflets designed to discredit labor were referred for reinvestigation. Soon there were enough evidence and confessions to place these acts definitely at the door of the Black Legion.

At this writing, though police have not taken very diligently to trailing all clues, more than 60 members of the terror organization have been arrested, charged with a part in the crimes. At last was discovered the secret organization which for over three years had menaced the people of Michigan, Ohio, and other parts.

## II.

### THE HOOD IS LIFTED

The form and program of the Black Legion and its caliber are vividly illustrated in the fearful initiation rites that its applicants must go through. The oath that is administered supposedly incorporates secrets of the organization. Secrecy must be kept on pain of death by the Legion's "execution squad".

The scene is a dark woods or an unlighted basement. The applicants are brought in by their respective sponsors and led inside a circle of black-robed night riders. They kneel as a pistol is pressed against the ribs; another is aimed at the heart. Then the officer in charge administers the oath, of which the following are parts:

"In the name of God and the devil, one to reward, the other to punish, and by the powers of light and darkness, good and evil, here under the black arch of heaven's avenging symbol I pledge and consecrate my heart, my brain, my body and my limbs and swear by all the powers of heaven and hell to devote my life to the obedience of my superiors and that no danger or peril shall deter me from executing their orders.

"I will exert every possible means in my power for the extermination of the anarchists, Communists, the Roman hierarchy and their abettors.

"I further pledge my heart, my brain, my body and my limbs never to betray a comrade and that I will submit to all the tortures that mankind can inflict and suffer the most horrible death rather than reveal a single word of this, my oath.

"Before violating a single clause or implied pledge of this, my obligation, I will pray to an avenging God and to an unmerciful devil to tear my heart out and roast it over flames of sulphur.

"That my head be split open and my brains be scattered over the earth, that my body be ripped up, my bowels be torn out and fed to the carrion birds.

"That each of my limbs be broken with stones and then cut off by inches that they may be food for the foulest birds of air.

"And lastly may my soul be given unto torment; that my body be submerged into molten metal and stifled in the flames of hell, and that this punishment may be meted out to me through all eternity in the name of God our creator. Amen."

Then follow the secrets:

## The Black Legion's Secrets

"The organization is one of chivalry and daring. It follows on the footsteps of the guerrilla bands of the South which were famed by their courage and bravery by their enemies whom they considered as outlaws. You have signified your willingness to join the organization.

"You are outlawed indeed. We have no charter, and no initiation fees were asked of you when you came here. If we were chartered under the laws of our state government our roster would have been available at all times.

"This organization was founded on Southern chivalry and is obligated to the preservation of the white race. The native-born white people of America are menaced on every side from above and below.

"If America is in the melting pot the white people are neither the aristocratic scum on top nor the dregs of society on the bottom which is composed of anarchists and Communists and all cults and creeds believing in social equality.

"Our ancestors won this land from the savages and paid for it with their blood. At the present neither of the two greater political parties stand for the laws and principles that the founders of this country intended us to enjoy.

"The Republicans stand for the rich while the Democrats seem to be in the grasp of the Pope of Rome.

"We fight as guerrillas, using any weapon that comes to our hand, preferably the ballot.

"We regard as enemies of ourselves and our country all aliens, Negroes, Jews and cults and creeds believing in racial equality and owing allegiance to any foreign potentate."

After this follows a series of questions to the applicant:

### Arms and Lynch Law

"Will you put this organization above any to which you now belong, have belonged or ever hope to?

"Would you be willing to forget your party and vote for the best man regardless of what party he belongs to if ordered to do so by your superior officers in this organization?

"Are you willing to take orders and go to your death if necessary to carry them out?

"Do you believe in white supremacy and that no Negro should have authority over a white man?

"Do you believe in intermarriage between races?

"Do you believe in restricted immigration and deportation of all undesirable aliens?

"Would you oppose by ballot and if necessary by force of arms

any attempt to place any portion of the public tax money in the hands of the Roman Catholic Church?

"Will you do all in your power to place only white Protestant Americans in public office?

"If it ever should become necessary to lie to protect a member of this organization, would you do so if ordered by your superior officers?

"After a term in office of this organization you may be required to perform some service on a higher plane than ordinary routine night riding. This would require a blood pact. Would you be willing to sign your name in your own blood?

"What is your attitude toward lynch law?

"Are you properly armed—do you own a revolver, rifle or shotgun? If not, will you arm yourself as soon as possible?"

### Obedience to an Unseen Superior

The blood-curdling language in the oath and the spooky scene arranged for the initiation rites are to instill fear into the new member and force him to absolute obedience to higher-ups who, by nature of the organization, are not even known to the members. The object is a disciplined blind army that can be mobilized at the command of these unseen master minds.

As a token of membership the new recruit is given a .38 caliber bullet. Tossing of the bullet serves in the same manner as a pass word. As the bullet is given him he is told that if he "talks" he will get the other bullet. "You can't quit the organization unless you are six feet under" is the ABC lesson that a Black Legionnaire is given. The Legion's code of terror is an immense power, though the organization is still in its early stages.

Inspector John I. Navarre, head of the Detroit Homicide Squad, who directed the investigation into the Poole murder, said the following of this fear that is instilled in the Black Legion:

"I'll say this—whoever organized that outfit was no slouch. Those habits fairly cried before they talked, so sternly had they been impressed with the danger of revealing the slightest detail of the secrets or ritual."

### Hides Under Many Forms

The Black Legion operates through every form that may prove convenient. It may be the "respectable" Wolverine Republican Club, the Wayne County Rifle and Pistol Club (where Dean and other Legionnaires went for regular target practice), the Bullet



Club, Malteca Club, Night Riders, Black Knights, a Tabernacle church, a group of National Guard officers, or even a secret reactionary clique in a trade union. Through false legal fronts the Black Legion lures many into its den.

The Black Legion reached out into the National Guard. Representative Dickstein of New York charged in the House that he has evidence that traces the origin of the Legion to correspondence between Dr. Samuel J. Rubley, Captain of the Michigan National Guard, Cavalry Division, and William Pelley, National Head of the Silver Rangers, whose program is exactly the same as the Legion's. Part of a letter to Pelley read:

"... hope to have 50 Klansmen mounted in two weeks' time. I have just talked with Doctor ... and we decided to have our families as far from Detroit as possible. I may be exceptionally blood-thirsty but I feel that the later winter snows will be tinged scarlet in the streets of Detroit. Conditions here are bad."

The Wayne County Rifle and Pistol Club was another blind for the Black Legion. It operated in the heart of Detroit's downtown area. Among those to appear regularly for target practice were Dean and many of the outstanding leaders in the Legion. The club was regularly chartered and received its share of free ammunition from the United States War Department.

The black hand of the hooded terrorists operates beneath these seemingly innocent organizations. According to the stories of Dean and confessions by others, the active members are formed into special agencies, in accordance with assignments—a death squad, anti-Communist squad, arson squad, etc. These are given such jobs as bombing a labor hall, burning the house of a labor supporter, murdering a political enemy, or breaking up a labor meeting.

The Black Legion enforces its discipline in the manner of criminal gangs. When a committee is chosen for a "job" another group is chosen to see that the assignment is carried out, or that committee shall itself be marked for a whipping or murder for insubordination.

#### The Legion Picks Its Members

People listen with horror to a description of the Black Legion

and conclude that such an organization cannot possibly attract many members. Only morons would join such an organization, they believe. But the Black Legion does not depend upon only voluntary applications. Members are forced to join in the same manner that girls are forced to become prostitutes.

The most common method is to lure a selected victim to a "picnic" or "fishing trip". Taken to a field or woods and placed in a circle of black-robed figures and guns pressed to his ribs and heart, the applicant is forced to swear to the oath. He is placed under the command of a "colonel" and is warned that if he breathes a word he will be killed. Gradually the member is enmeshed in criminal acts. In time, of necessity, he sticks to the gang for his own protection. The same ethics apply here as among a gang of criminals.

#### Black Legion "Job Service"

The Black Legion also uses economic and political tentacles to hold its members. It concentrates on recruiting political jobholders and government officials. Its connections in government are used to place Black Legionnaires on jobs. The majority of those arrested or found to be members of the Black Legion were found to be holding such jobs. This network had so developed in Michigan that M. Wesson Dickinson, State Director of Private Employment Agencies, was discovered to be linked with the Black Legion. His is a key position for the Black Legion.

Ecorse Village, where the Great Lakes Steel Corporation is located, furnished a good example of how the Legion's "job service" operates. The village employment director was found to be a member of the Black Legion, and to have cooperated with the company's employment bureau. He placed Black Legionnaires on jobs, and the company had apparently posted the people recommended by him in strategic spots in the plant. As a result, a strong local of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers was smashed.

#### The Latest in Night Riding

Membership figures for the hooded organization were estimated to range from 30,000 to millions. The "millions" is obviously

ridiculous. It was given by William Sheperd, of Bellaire, Ohio, who claimed to have founded the organization. V. H. Effinger, of Lima, Ohio, national head of the Black Legion, also gave fantastic figures. From all indications the low figure is closest to the truth.

Though a national organization, it is chiefly in Michigan, and to some extent in Ohio. It will be seen further on why the organizations have taken root first in these regions. Organizations bearing close resemblance to and perhaps organically linked with, the Black Legion have been found in many parts of the country. There are the Silver Shirts, Ku Klux Klan, Crusaders, William Pelley's Christian Party, and others with the same program. Undoubtedly the tendency has been toward coordinating these organizations into a national network. The guiding spirit of that tendency is the same black hand that has brought into being the Black Legion, the latest and most horrible of these creations.

Who is this moving spirit? Watch where the Black Legion rides and you will recognize who the master minds behind the scene are.

### III.

#### THE BLACK LEGION RIDES

In its three years of active "riding" the Black Legion left in its wake dead men, wrecked labor halls, floggings and other horrible acts, of which only a few examples can be given in this pamphlet.

Political assassination was an important phase of its work. It aims to sink its claws into public administrations. The Black Legion brought into politics methods that put in the shade the crooked methods of any of the notorious political machines.

Dean's story of how he was ordered to kill Arthur Kingsley, Highland Park publisher of a community paper, illustrates the Black Legion's role in politics. The selected death squad met in a field and entered into a "blood pact" which, as the Legion's oath provides, is necessary for a "higher" form of service. Each childishly dipped a toothpick in his own blood and signed his name as a pledge that, whatever the plot is, it is to be loyally carried out. Following that a "colonel" revealed to Dean that he was chosen for the noble deed of killing Kingsley.

For weeks, Dean said, he angled for an opportunity to shoot Kingsley, and at one time had actually chased him for several miles. On several occasions State Legion Commander Arthur Lupp and N. Ray Markland, former mayor of Highland Park, met with him to stress the importance of the assignment. Kingsley's paper opposed Markland's re-election. "My whole campaign will be ruined if you don't act quickly," Markland said to him as he handed him a blackjack, "Take this, you might need it."

When the plot to murder Kingsley was revealed by Dean, sixteen were arrested for taking part. Among them were Lupp, Markland, two factory policemen, a police officer, and several Highland Park city employees. At the time of his arrest Markland was employed as an investigator in the office of Wayne County Prosecutor McCrea and was apparently in a beautiful position to warn his fellow terrorists of any action that might be in store against them. At that very moment he was busy on a Legion flogging case.



Two city employees testified how they were forcibly inducted into a Black Legion meeting with Markland, a city councilman and chief of police in Highland Park, taking part in the ceremony. Firmly entrenched in city politics, the Black Legion thrived in Highland Park.

A similar assassination was attempted in Ecorse with Mayor William Voisine as the target. The squad of three men who were assigned to kill him included Dean and two others who murdered Poole.

The main objectives of the Black Legion are in its anti-labor program. Its hatred of Communism stands above all else, and a Communist, according to the Black Legion, is the liberal, live-wire trade unionist, or any person who wouldn't subscribe to its program of race hatred and religious intolerance.

#### Marchuk Murder Mystery Cleared

George Marchuk, Secretary of the Auto Workers Union in Lincoln Park, was found dead in an open lot on December 22, 1933, with a bullet in his head. He was last seen that night when he left a meeting of the Unemployment Councils, of which he was also a leader. The Auto Workers Union organized a delegation which appeared before the Lincoln Park Council and charged that the murder was the work of a secret anti-labor organization. The Knights of Dearborn, which was formed only a month earlier "to promote civics and fight Communism", was named as the likely organization. Leaders of the strong K.K.K. organization in Lincoln Park were named. But it was an appeal to the Black Legionnaires themselves. The complaints were simply filed.

When the Black Legion was exposed almost three years later the case was again revived. Lincoln Park people recalled that a certain retired Detroit one-legged policeman named Isaac "Peg-Leg" White, who had been discovered intimately connected with Black Legion activities, had threatened Marchuk and several others shortly before the murder. Others were named but at this writing nothing has been done. The big swing to the A. F. of L. automobile locals was on at that time. The Auto Workers Union had just decided to merge into the A. F. of L. and was about to begin intense recruiting of Ford workers in the down-river area.

#### Bielak Taken for a Ride

John Bielak, live, youthful A. F. of L. organizer in the Hudson plant was found riddled with bullets on March 15, 1934, on a road about ten miles from Monroe, Michigan. Shortly prior to the murder Bielak led a successful stoppage for a wage increase in the metal finishing department of the Hudson plant. Shortly after that, when the company attempted to discharge Bielak, the workers in his department struck and forced his reinstatement. The Hudson local, with approximately 7,000 members, was the key automobile union in Detroit at that time.

When Bielak kissed her goodbye on the night of March 15, his widow said, he told her he had a date with Bill Moore, his foreman who, by the way, was an extreme reactionary in the union. Moore, police learned, was attending a Black Legion meeting on that night and admitted having been the last to see Bielak alive. He was questioned and released.

But this is only part of the story. Captain Ira H. Marmon of the Michigan State Police disclosed the following which came to him from a prominent American Legion member, employed as an investigator (industrial spy) by the Hudson Motor Car company!

#### A Stool Meets the Legion

Shortly before Bielak's murder three members of the Black Legion--Isaac "Peg-Leg" White, Andrew Martin (held for kidnapping and flogging in another case) and Roy Hepner (leader in the plot to murder Kingsley), came to the Hudson Company with a list of five names, Bielak's among them, who they said were Communists employed in the plant and should be discharged. Marmon's informant, the spy, was assigned by the company to investigate and trace the people associated with the named "Communists".

He related how he met with the Black Legionnaires in a house. "I too am interested in combating Communism," he told them. "If you people will help me I will join your outfit." After some questioning he described how the Legionnaires donned black robes, pulled out their revolvers, administered their oath over him, and presented him with a bullet.

Shortly afterward, according to the story, Bielak was taken for a "ride" by the Black Legion, beaten in the automobile, shot five times and thrown out on the road. His young widow was unable to understand what reason anyone might have had for murdering her husband. All she knew about it was that "when John came home after work he was always talking about the new batch of applications for the union that he got".

The "Peg-Leg" White mentioned was found and interviewed by the *Detroit News* on a farm near Lyons, Michigan. Though denying that he was connected with the Black Legion or that he knew anything of Bielak, he admitted having visited the Hudson plant and having been an official in the K.K.K. until he was "double-crossed".

#### Ask "Peg Leg", He Knows Plenty

"I visited the Hudson plant. A few years ago I called on all the plants of Detroit", White told the *Detroit News* (June 2, 1936). "Once or twice I turned in a bunch of names to the Hudson Motor Car Company. How many I don't remember but there were several typewritten sheets.

"This was done about the time the Communists made their big drive on Detroit, the time of the Dearborn riot [he means the Ford Hunger March—G.M.I. I was with the Citizens' Committee then. I can't remember what names were on the list."

Asked to explain his "Citizens' Committee" White said,

"I don't know much about it and I don't know who ran it. You see we didn't operate that way. A man just came to my house and gave me a list of names and asked me to take them to the factories. I took some to Ford's, some to Budd Wheel, in fact to all the plants that had strikes or threats of strikes.

"Others usually went with me on the calls to the plants but I can't remember who went along to the Hudson plant. The names Hepner and Martin mean nothing to me. I met thousands of people about that time—and I never was any good at remembering names.

"We didn't get anything out of it but the personnel departments of the plants were always glad to get information about the Communists and they thanked us. It was merely a courtesy proposition."

White was not arrested, though resolutions adopted at mass meetings demanded his immediate arrest. Five weeks later, when at last he was wanted for the burning of the Workers Camp, situated near Detroit, White was missing.

#### The Legion in an Election Campaign

In the spring of 1935 Detroit labor set an example in independent political labor action. The Detroit Federation of Labor, Communist Party, independent unions and most other labor organizations joined to elect Maurice Sugar, labor candidate, for Records Judge. It was then that Sugar polled 63,000 votes. The final campaign rally was set for March 30 at the Northern High School. The Board of Education had refused to grant the hall because "Communists will speak". But following a sharp struggle a liberal judge granted an injunction that compelled the board to grant the hall. But what the Board of Education failed to do through legal means the Black Legion hoped to succeed by its own methods.

But that part of the story was told more than a year later by Dean after he had already confessed to the Poole shooting. A meeting of the Black Legion was called on the very night of the campaign rally. One squad was dispatched to the Workers Camp to set fire to its buildings; the act of arson was successfully carried out that night. The other squad was to go to the high school meeting. Dean and Leslie Black, President of the Wolverine Republican Club, were to cut the electric light wires. When the meeting was thrown into darkness, six Legionnaires in the audience were to throw stench bombs. Forged leaflets were also prepared, signed by the Communist Party, which were to be scattered in the meeting during the confusion.

The plan miscarried because by mistake Dean cut only the emergency wires. The janitor at the school on the next day informed Sugar that emergency wires were found cut and gave him a sample of a bundle of the leaflets that he found. The leaflet showed that the object was to discredit the Communist Party and the splendid campaign for Sugar. The leaflet read as follows:

"Comrades, rise against the capitalistic form of government. Throw out the bosses and kill the aggressors of the common people. Are you going to remain in the gutter and be trampled upon by the capitalists until you are dead? Get them first or they will get you.

"Negroes, rise against your white oppressors. We are all equal and you should have an equal chance with all whites. We offer you that chance. Do your part to bring this about by electing Comrade Maurice



Sugar to the Records Court. We will then have a chance to work from within and tear down this damnable form of government.

"Communist Party of America."

The obvious forgery did not prevent the Board of Education and the Hearst press from making capital out of it. They charged that the leaflet was actually genuine Communist propaganda. On later occasions, when the Board refused to grant the schools for labor meetings the leaflet was used as an excuse.

#### Dean—Sugar's Neighbor

Some time after the campaign for Recorder Judgeship Detroit labor considered further steps in independent political action. Sugar was put forward as candidate for the Common Council. When Dean was searched, following the Poole murder, the sheriff's aides found upon him a newspaper clipping with Sugar's picture upon it. Asked to explain the picture, Dean coldly told of having lived in an apartment of the same building where Sugar lived and that he was ordered by Commander Lupp of the Black Legion to bomb Sugar. Records showed that Dean occupied the apartment for five months. Asked why he didn't carry through the job, Dean said that he "got cold feet because too many people would have been killed". When the bombing plot was given up, Lupp discussed with him the possibility of calling Sugar out "on a case" and "bumping him off". Apparently as late as May 22, 1936, the Farmer-Labor leader was still on the Legion's "bump-off" list.

The "arson squad" of the Black Legion confessed to the burning of the farm of William Mollenhauer in Oakland County (Pontiac) in August, 1934. Mollenhauer was a labor sympathizer. Instead of searching for the criminals the county sheriff searched for "Red" literature in the ruins of the farm buildings.

Similarly another arson squad confessed to the burning of the Workers Camp (the second time) also located in Oakland County. They were given only six-month prison sentences.

#### Black Legion "Unionism"

The black hand of the Legion also stretched out into unions.

Black Legionnaires were found in the automobile, street car men's and building trades unions. They expressed the most reactionary policies wherever they were. President Frank X. Martel of the Detroit Federation of Labor made the following statement at the time he appointed a committee of five to investigate Black Legion activities in unions:

"We have wondered what has caused the friction in the labor movement of the state in the past few years. I have sensed these things when unions would withdraw suddenly. . . . Undoubtedly the Black Legion has been in the back of these things."

Undoubtedly Martel had in mind the group of officials who had withdrawn from the A. F. of L., the once powerful Hudson local, with 7,000 members, Pontiac local with 4,000 members and the Oldsmobile local, and had formed what became known as the Associated Automobile Workers of America. The withdrawal came suddenly, at a moment when a general strike was being discussed in the automobile industry. As independent unions the locals disintegrated and were practically wiped out. These were the strongest locals of the A. F. of L. in Detroit at a moment when the first real beginnings to unionize the industry were made.

Following the Black Legion disclosure, Tice Woody, President of the Pontiac organization, revealed to the writer how he and several others in his union had joined the Black Legion on the idea that it might help labor. But when he joined he discovered that Arthur Greer, President of the Hudson local, and Richard L. Byrd, whom President Roosevelt appointed as "labor's representative" on the defunct Automobile Labor Board, were already in the Black Legion. Add to this the fact that Greer, outstanding leader in the movement, was by his own admission connected with the Department of Justice at one time, and only a year before the Hudson local came into existence was chairman of the company union's election committee, then it isn't hard to see that these were people who deliberately plotted to destroy the unions. They certainly did a thorough job.

Strikebreaking was an important phase of the Legion's activity. The organization in Toledo, Ohio, tried to break the Chevrolet strike in May, 1935. Evidence came to light that General Motors'

agents placed confidence on what the Black Legion might do. Only the splendid solidarity of the workers and night-and-day picketing foiled the plans of the Legion.

In like manner the Legion did its part in the Motor Products strike. The homes of at least a half-dozen strikers were bombed, and many strikers were threatened if they didn't stay away from the picket line.

"No one can doubt that bombings that took place during the Motor Products strike were done by the Black Legion," said Lloyd Jones, one of the strike leaders. "In fact some of our strikers never dared go home at night without a bodyguard or a fast car and a good gun."

Jones disclosed that a secret group calling itself the "Invisible Eye of Labor", out to drive the Negroes and Communists out of unions, was operating in the Motor Products plant.

So, in Ohio, during a bitterly fought onion strike, near Lima, in 1935, the Black Legion attracted first public attention there. The strike leader was kidnapped and beaten as were many strikers. In July, 1935, the state legislative committee held a hearing at which the activities of the Black Legion were disclosed. Mary Hirley, the stenographer who took notes of the hearing, was met on the steps of the State House by four men who demanded to know what she did with the notes and threatened her if she didn't destroy them.

#### Killing Negroes for a "Thrill"

The Black Legion outdid itself in the killing of the 42-year-old Negro hod carrier, Silas Coleman. On May 25, 1935, when Coleman's body was found in a swamp near Pinckney, Mich., riddled with bullets, Livingstone County police gave it up as an unsolved crime. More than a year later Dean told a story which for wanton viciousness is unparalleled in the Legion's long list of crimes.

Dean was not alone to tell it. Another one of the Black Legion killers, James Roy Lorange, retold it in every detail and bit by bit others brought evidence that established Dean's story beyond a shadow of doubt.

Here is part of the story in Dean's own words:

"I was working for the Public Lighting Commission at the Mistersky Power Station and Harvey Davis came in one day and we were talking and he wanted to know if I could get a colored guy for him.

"He said they were going to have a party out to the lake and they wanted to have a little excitement. They wanted to have a colored fellow, didn't make any difference where he came from as long as he was black. They wanted to take him out and kill him. Colonel Davis said he wanted to know what it felt like to shoot a Negro.

"So I got hold of Charlie Rouse and Charlie said he had just the right man, he had one working for him, so we made arrangements with Davis. . . ."

Dean related how Coleman was lured to go for a ride with the two men on that fateful Saturday night, on the promise that he would be taken to his boss contractor at a summer cottage to collect \$18 in back wages that was coming to him.

"We went to the cottage and I went to the back door and there was Harvey Davis and his wife, Jack Bannerman and his wife, Ervin Lee and his wife and Roy Lorange and his wife, sitting at the table having a party drinking beer and liquor.

"Davis called Ervin Lee and Roy Lorange and Jack Bannerman into the room and says to them to get their guns and see that they are loaded. 'We've got him', he says."

Coleman was then taken out to a swamp near Pinckney. Dean continued:

"When the colored fellow came round to the rear of the car, wondering to see what we was doing around there, and just as he came round and faced up, Davis took his .38 and he shot first and then the others shot. The colored fellow went to say something and the bullet seemed to pierce his lung or something and he couldn't talk and he made a kind of 'a-h-h-h' gurgle in his throat or something kind of so.

"He run like a deer down there and when he started running they say 'Don't let him get away' and ran after him emptying their guns after him.

"We went back to our cars and drove back to the cottage. They gave Charlie Rouse and I a shot of liquor and a bottle of beer and we drove back to Detroit but they stayed there and continued the party."

At this writing both Lorange and Dean came out with the



sensational story that if the Ford-owned mill pond in the vicinity of the marsh where Coleman's body was found, would be drained seven more bodies of "thrill" killing victims would be found.

### Bacteria for the Legion's Enemies

But the Black Legion shattered its own record of sadism and murder when it plotted to inject typhoid germs into milk and cheese distributed through Jewish markets. As fantastic as this scheme may appear, it was confessed by William Guthrie, a Black Legion "intelligence man", and Charles T. McCutcheon, the chemist and bacteriologist in the case, who was employed in the milk inspection department of the Detroit Department of Health. Arthur Lupp, Michigan state commander of the Black Legion, worked close to McCutcheon as a public milk inspector.

Guthrie told how Lupp and McCutcheon came to his home and inspected the possibility of breeding typhoid germs in his basement. McCutcheon, when questioned in the Prosecutor's office, coldly gave an account of how the Legion planned to destroy "its enemies". Lupp discussed with him the possibility of making poisoned "death needles" that might be jammed into people in a crowd. He was interested in a "cyanide gas" that could be injected into a room through a keyhole. Much thought was also given to a small bomb "the size of a cigarette" that could blow up an automobile. Lupp was also interested in the manufacture of stench and explosive bombs.

When Detroit health authorities announced McCutcheon's discharge for keeping to himself this plot for more than a year, they also revealed that McCutcheon for some unexplained reason engaged in bacteriological experiments at the city laboratory. This was not in line with his duty. McCutcheon pleaded that he was continually shadowed by the terrorists and warned that if the plot was ever revealed it would be all over with him.

On February 16, 1935, James Armour, a Negro steel worker, was suddenly shot as he walked home at night. All he could remember is that three men jumped out of the dark and fired. He was in critical condition for several months.

A year and a half later Dean told the story:

"We went to Ecorse to look for Clarence Oliver [Negro campaign worker for Mayor Voisine of Ecorse, also a Legion target] but couldn't find him any place. Well, Rouse and Davis and me were driving back through Ecorse to Detroit and we saw this guy [Armour] walking along. Davis said, 'I want to kill a nigger'. We stopped the car and Davis fired one shot at him. He fell and we left."

Armour was not known to any of the Legion party, but had just happened to come along when the "colonel" felt the urge to kill.

The above are only a few of the cases that have become known publicly. Who can doubt that a series of at least a half-dozen bombings of labor halls; of the Modern Book Shop, in Detroit, an outlet for labor literature; and other attacks upon the working class were the work of the Black Legion?

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## Wolverine Republican League

2120 UNION GUARDIAN BUILDING  
 DETROIT MICHIGAN

April 30, 1936.

Dear Members:-

On Monday May 11th, at 8:00 P.M.,  
 the Wolverine Republican League will hold its  
 annual meeting in the Findlater Temple, on the  
 corner of West Lafayette and Waterman avenues,  
 for the purpose of electing directors. This  
 will be a closed meeting for members only.

We are enclosing a petition of  
 Wilbur M. Brucker for senator. Please fill out  
 same and return as soon as possible or turn it  
 in at the meeting on May 11th; where you may also  
 obtain additional copies if needed.

Our last meeting put the Wolverine  
 League out in front.

"LET'S KEEP IT THERE."

Very truly yours,

FLOYD NUGENT,  
 Secretary.

## IV.

## THE LEGION'S POLITICAL FRONT

If you think that the Black Legion was just a peculiar fancy of free lancers, you have another guess coming. It is intimately connected with the most reactionary political circles. From all the evidence that came to light the Black Legion was undoubtedly a creation of Republicans. Every political link confirms this, and there are many.

The first Black Legion organization uncovered was the Wolverine Republican Club. Five of the group that took part in the murder of Charles Poole were officers of the club. The president of the Wolverine and several others who had their names on the club's stationery as officers were arrested for taking part in the Kingsley and Voisine political assassination plots.

It is the Wolverine Club that sponsored the candidacy of former Governor Wilbur M. Brucker, for United States Senate on the Republican ticket in the 1936 election. Brucker has always been the spokesman of the most reactionary circles in Michigan, and is one of the most vicious Red-baiters in the country. Brucker was one of the main sponsors of the infamous Dunkel-Baldwin anti-labor gag bill in the 1935 legislature of Michigan. His main base of operation is committees of the American Legion on subversive activities. Brucker was also the prime mover of a conference of patrioteers held in Grand Rapids in October, 1935, to form the "Constitution Protective League, Inc.". According to the program of the organization printed in a folder, it is to work under close guidance of the Michigan Manufacturers Association, and is to coordinate all anti-labor organizations in Michigan. A list of activities for these constitution-savers includes spying upon labor, countering "agitators" and forming squads to break up meetings and demonstrations.

## Black Legion Gets Maiden Speech

Brucker delivered his maiden campaign speech before a mass meeting arranged by the Wolverine Republican Club. A letter sent to all members on the club's own stationery for the meeting on May 11 stated:

Letter on its own stationery sent by the Wolverine Republican Club. The club address is the office of a prominent Republican, Harry Z. Marx. Check marks indicate the five Legionnaires who took part in the murder of Charles Poole. Many of the officers named were arrested for other crimes.



"We are enclosing a petition of Wilber M. Brucker for Senator. Please fill out same and return as soon as possible or turn in at meeting on May 11, where you may also obtain additional copies if needed." (See Plate 1 on p. 22.)

Sponsors for the Brucker mass meeting under the Wolverine's auspices were other political notorieties. Among them was reported Police Commissioner Heinrich Pickert. In fact, from several sources it was charged that the commissioner is a member of the Black Legion. That, of course, would not be a surprise, as Pickert's police department has carried on activities of a Black Legion character. Police have shot down people on mere suspicion of crime, suppressed civil rights, and actually encouraged bombings and similar outrages against labor. The fact is that in the three years that the Black Legion carried on its nefarious work it was not hindered by the police department.

#### Worked Hard for G.O.P.

Among the speakers who appeared under the Black Legion's auspices were also Judge L. Eugene Sharp and Gomer Krise, Republican candidate for Wayne County Prosecutor. Both are notorious reactionaries. Of course, these individuals hastened to shake themselves loose from the Legion when the lid blew off. But the jailed terrorists rather boasted of having been in the company of such "big men".

"I worked hard for Wilber M. Brucker and Governor Fitzgerald. When Brucker spoke at our meeting recently I handed him ten nominating petitions that I circulated and filled," said John Bannerman, one of Poole's killers. (*Detroit News*, May 29, 1935).

"I had a sort of hankering to get into politics and so I went to this Wolverine Republican Club one night," said young Paul Edwards, who also helped to kill Poole. "Some of the biggest men in this state were there. Mr. Brucker made a speech and I said to myself, 'if this organization is good enough for Mr. Brucker and those other big men it's good enough for me'." (*Ibid.*)

"I just thought it was a Republican Club. I joined the night Brucker spoke," said Edgar J. Baldwin, another one involved in the Poole case. (*Ibid.*)

The Brucker type is the front for the Black Legion. They are the star recruiters and serve to give the impression that the organization has "strong backing".

#### A Judge in Good Company

Judge Sharp's link was established in several other instances. His clerk and ardent campaigner was L. J. Black, a leading figure in the Kingsley murder plot, and president of the Wolverine Club. It was Sharp who endorsed a pistol permit for Arthur Lupp, the Legion's state commander. It was the Black Legion gang that campaigned for Sharp in 1935.

Harry Z. Marx, prominent Republican attorney, is a director of the club and chairman of its Delegates Committee. His office was designated as the club's headquarters on its stationery. This is the very same Marx who was head of the "Americanization Committee" of the American Legion in 1934. In 1935 when three Black Legionnaires were arrested near Adrian, Michigan, with black hoods, pistols and rope in their car, it was Marx and V. H. Effinger, of Lima, Ohio, National Head of the Black Legion, who rushed to the office of the State Police and pleaded that the men be dismissed. His law partner, Marion Leacock, is chairman of the Resolutions Committee of the Wolverine. Significantly, on the very day that the Black Legion exposé blew out, Marx and Leacock were in City Hall representing Police Commissioner Pickert in a hearing at which labor groups demanded the commissioner's ouster. (*Detroit Times*, May 22.)

In the spring of 1935, Marx was the "Red-baiting" candidate for Recorder Judge. It was during that period that the Black Legion tried to break up the campaign rallies of Maurice Sugar, labor candidate, and issued forged leaflets to discredit his campaign.

#### State Employment Director in the Fold

Among the Republican state officials to be linked with the Black Legion is M. Wesson Dickinson, Superintendent of Private Employment Bureaus in the State of Michigan. He was formerly manager of the Secretary of State's office. In addition to having

been named as an insider in Black Legion affairs, Dickinson was also one of those to endorse Lupp's pistol permit.

Though the investigation into the Black Legion was veiled in secrecy the names of a large number of lesser political lights were revealed to be on the Legion's roster. The names of Frank Darin, former state representative from River Rouge, Oren A. Johnson, formerly assistant prosecutor, J. J. Pettijohn, Ecorse Village trustee, Arthur A. Moore, ex-president of Melvindale and a former state legislator, and others appeared on the Wolverine's list of officials. It should be noted that there are many "formers". The Black Legion is a means for a come-back to many a discredited and defeated politician.

In Oakland County (Pontiac) where the Black Legion is strong, County Prosecutor David C. Pence admitted having joined the Bullet Club, a Black Legion affiliate. "I have never had any complaint about the activities of the so-called Bullet Club during the time I have been in office," said Pence several days before he admitted his own membership. (*Detroit News*, May 23, 1935.)

References to more government officials who are linked to the Black Legion or have taken part in its terror acts will be found in other parts of this pamphlet.

#### McCrea Also a Joiner

But the Republican Party is not the sole Black Legion nest. At the height of the Black Legion exposure, with Wayne County Prosecutor Duncan McCrea regarded as the great hope for a clean-up, the *Detroit Times* suddenly came out with a photostat of an application card for Black Legion membership signed by McCrea. While it is true that the *Detroit Times* found this to be a convenient way to stall progress in the exposure, which was gaining rapid momentum, McCrea was unable to make a flat denial. He admitted that he "might have signed" when he was campaigning and as is customary with politicians was "just a joiner". The application cards for the Black Legion were camouflaged as Automobile Insurance Cards, and McCrea claimed that he could not have done so knowingly.

But so was McCrea's office a Black Legion nest. Former Mayor Markland of Highland Park was employed as one of his investi-

gators. Another investigator was an official in the Klan. Still another one, who according to the card sponsored McCrea's membership, was discharged as investigator.

In such manner the tentacles of the Black Legion reached out into every possible political hole. Black hand methods and assassination plots built up a power for the hidden masters who direct the Legion.

#### Politicians Seized With Jitters

The sudden explosion that rapidly lifted hoods from the faces of many prominent politicians threw Michigan political circles into consternation. They were jittery, as they did not know what the next newspaper editions might bring. Governor Fitzgerald was in a fright. If the exposé continued freely, his whole administration was threatened with a major scandal.

Michigan manufacturers provided for such occasions—a one-man secret grand jury. This scheme was put through several years ago supposedly for "economy". It works as follows: when a scandal breaks out a judge is picked to conduct the entire investigation. In major cases the Attorney General assists him. No one is permitted to attend hearings. After witnesses present what they know to the judge they are legally bound to seal their lips on pain of being jailed for contempt of court, by the same judge. The "grand" jury alone decides how long the investigation should drag. It is an excellent scheme to shut the mouths of the very ones who have much to tell.

The Attorney General who took over the investigation on a statewide scale and actually subordinated all county prosecutors was David H. Crowley, who was attorney for the Fisher Body division of General Motors, when he was appointed by Governor Fitzgerald. The one-man grand jury is Judge James E. Chenot, whose main election support came from the Ford-controlled "down-river" gang that was so closely linked to the Black Legion.

"I have control of the proceedings in this court. Anyone who violates the secrecy of this grand jury will go to jail." These were Chenot's first words as he began to call witnesses.

Quickly Chenot subpoenaed Captain Ira H. Marmon, of the State Police who, as we have seen earlier in this pamphlet, came



out with the most startling revelations. He disclosed the Bielak story, and other distinct anti-labor cases. It was he who charged publicly that at least 50 unexplained "suicides" were Legion murders. He promised more startling discoveries. Then he testified before the judge and was completely silenced. In that way, one after another were silenced the chief informers and investigators. So also was the press practically silenced.

The full story of the Black Legion, its long trail of unpublished crimes, and the identity of the names of over 500 Black Legion members that the police compiled, as well as the political figures among them, were safely stored away with the Judge and the Attorney General. Both are trusted servants of the very same people who brought the Black Legion into being.

#### Federal Investigation Shelved

A cry went up for a federal investigation. All labor and liberal organizations joined. The local Democrats, including the Prosecutor, joined in the call for a federal investigation. Demands for a federal inquiry poured into Washington from all sides. It was freely charged that the Michigan Republicans were only trying to suppress evidence against themselves. Meanwhile, a national menace to democratic rights continued to grow.

Farmer-Labor Senator Benson introduced a resolution in the Senate calling for a federal investigation into the activities of the Black Legion as well as of all similar organizations throughout the country. But his resolution remained buried in committees as both Houses adjourned and the Congressmen and Senators rushed home to dive into the election campaign. Meanwhile, safe from a federal committee, the Michigan Republicans proceeded to hush up the entire issue.

Why the Democratic-controlled legislature and President Roosevelt were so anxious to shelve the issue will become clear as the pamphlet progresses.

#### V.

### THE ROOTS OF THE BLACK LEGION

Where are the roots of the Black Legion?

The Black Legion began its activities some time in 1932, though members of the organization trace their history to some years earlier. It appears that there was a split in the Ku Klux Klan of Michigan, Ohio and Indiana. The Klans in these states were at one time among the strongest in the country. A strong base for the Klan was the mass migration of Southerners to the North, especially to the automobile centers.

Whatever the direct cause might have been for the development of the rift in the K.K.K., it was about the end of 1932 that the Michigan manufacturers took advantage of the opposition to the Grand Dragons to bring into existence the Black Legion. The new organization was to be an "up-to-date" outfit conforming to the requirements of the Northern manufacturers. The white robes were dyed black, and a strictly disciplined military structure was set up. The old program of race hatred and religious intolerance was retained, but now the main emphasis was to be on the anti-labor or, as they termed it, the anti-Communist aspect of the program. The Black Legion promised to be a "real" night-riding organization and to promote more aggressive terror action.

#### The Rising Counter Tide

The "new line" in night-riding was introduced in 1932-33, shortly after the Briggs strike (January, 1933), and the historic Ford Hunger March (March, 1932). This march marked a turn in the development of the working class movement of Michigan—the country's foremost open-shop region. It marked the shattering of the Ford illusion.

All the strength of the Ford and Detroit police was thrown against the marchers, who were on their way to "King Henry" to ask for bread or jobs. A shower of bullets was poured into the mass of workers. Five were killed and scores were wounded. This aroused unprecedented mass indignation among the workers and

people generally. The workers resisted the reign of terror that followed. This swing upward climaxed in a May Day demonstration of over 50,000 in Detroit.

Coupled with this, there began a rapid influx of automobile workers into the newly-created federal unions of the A. F. of L. This was stimulated by the promise of collective bargaining in the just introduced N.R.A. In such traditional open-shop cities as Flint, 11,000 workers flocked to the unions. Similarly, they joined in Pontiac, Detroit and other places. Strikes of auto workers occurred more frequently. The manufacturers were seriously worried. Michigan labor was at last raising its head.

### The Liberty League Takes the Helm

The Black Legion was one of the means that the manufacturers advanced to counter the sweep towards unionism. It was designed to be a network of strike-breaking terror bands, spies and killers of active union workers. From then on their instructions were to come not from a Grand Dragon in Georgia but from the Northern kings of industry—General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, du Pont, United States Steel—the very top circle of exploiters of the American people who today are combined in the Liberty League. They speak through the Hearst newspapers. Their political expression is the Republican Party and their candidate is Alfred Landon.

The poison fruits of the Black Legion blossomed forth first in Michigan because that region furnished the most fertile ground for it. The state is traditionally open-shop. The workers had as yet learned little of the power of solidarity, and had little influence on the political life of the state. Most of the auto cities are like huge company towns. Industrial spies hound the workers at every turn. Civil rights are unceremoniously violated. The impotency of craft unions in such a highly organized mass production industry as automobile put unionism in a bad light to many workers. Michigan was a "prosperity paradise" during the Coolidge-Hoover dynasty. It was in such a field that Hearst's *Detroit Times*, and those newspapers that are almost down to its level and Father Charles Coughlin planted their poisonous seeds—the seeds of Red-baiting and false Americanism.

### Three Years of Training

The Black Legion was not the first organization of its kind to rise in the United States. But it has developed further than any of its predecessors to play its evil role. For at least three years without interruption it trained its terror bands. With the financial and political backing of the industrialists, and brigades of morons and sadists for an active core, the organization laid a foundation for itself. Its roots already began to stretch out to parts outside of Michigan. They spread easiest in those regions where the workers were unorganized and where the Liberty League-Hearst-Republican combination enjoyed strongest support.



## THE BLACK LEGION AND LAW AND ORDER

Proud of his "G-Men" whose war on criminals has been publicized, filmed and broadcast throughout the length and breadth of the country the American citizen wonders: is it possible that our "G-Men" knew nothing of the Black Legion and its three-year crime record? How could such a large organization escape the Department of Justice for so long a time?

The truth is that federal and local police authorities knew all about the Black Legion since 1934. The fact is that they were informed at least six different times.

When Arlington Jones, Highland Park city employee, related to the city council the Black Legion activities of several officials of that city who had forced him to join the organization in 1934, he said:

"I made reports of the threats to the Highland Park mayor, to Arthur Kingsley [Highland Park publisher] to the prosecutor's office, and to the Federal Department of Justice men, but nothing was done." (*Detroit News*, July 3.)

Mayor Joseph M. Halkett of Highland Park confirmed at the very same hearing that Jones had told him in 1934 how he was forcibly initiated into the Black Legion, with Highland Park Councilman Wilson holding a gun at his ribs, and Chief of Police Sparling and former Mayor Markland present.

"I couldn't conceive of men in public life doing the things he said were done," was the mayor's only excuse for doing nothing.

### Pontiac Stirred in 1934

In Pontiac, where General Motors controls all politics, the Black Legion organization elected most of the city administration in 1934. Its immediate step following election was to unseat the old police chief from power, because Black Legionnaires under him had been promised promotions after election. A public hearing took place on the issue during the winter of 1934-35. Black Legion

membership of several police officers and county officials was exposed. It was the main topic in Pontiac for months. But nothing came of the whole affair. The police head eventually had to resign.

### Ohio Farmer Told "G-Men"

William M. Smith, a farmer of Lima, Ohio, said he had told police and a "G-Man" eight months before the Poole murder, how he and several others were "taken for a ride" to be initiated in the Black Legion. He was released after refusing to accept the oath, but was warned that he would be "finished in 24 hours" if he "squawked". Sheriff W. E. Kelley of that district stated that he had also asked the Department of Justice to investigate the Black Legion and the threats to Smith in September, 1935, but that nothing came of that.

### The "Colonel" Arrested in 1935

On August 12, 1935, nine months before the Poole murder, Detroit police acted on a tip by Albert Bates, a Ford employee whom the Black Legion had marked for initiation. They arrested three men—Harvey Davis, Lowell Rushing and Earl Mullen. The men had with them black robes, hoods adorned with skull and cross-bones, several pistols, rope, adhesive tape and Black Legion literature. The arrest was reported under a headline across the front page of the *Detroit Times* on August 13.

The Davis arrested is the same "Colonel" Davis who directed the Poole killing. Rushing was also one of the killers. From as much as leaked out through the *Detroit Times*, it is evident that police knew enough of the hooded organization to warrant serious action. But for some "strange" reason the three were released. The fact that, as the *Times* reported, Detective Harry Mikuliak, director of the "Red squad", was investigator in the case may throw some light on the reason.

### Federal Men on Case in 1935

Ten days later, on August 22, three other Detroit men were arrested near Adrian, Mich. They were Elsworth Shinnberry, Roy L. Hepner and Andrew Martin. Then, too, police came upon

the scene when a ceremony of the Legion was about to begin. Again police found black hoods, knives and guns. These, the prisoners explained, according to the *Detroit Times* of Aug. 23, were for "protection against Communists". The *Times* story mentioned the Black Legion by name and that "following the arrests a federal investigator was sent here from Detroit". The *Detroit Times* also carried the information that Harry Z. Marx, who has already been introduced in this pamphlet as Director of the Wolverine Club and whose office is the headquarters of that Black Legion organization, appeared as lawyer for the three. Subsequently, the men were released, because a judge said "the search was performed without a warrant".

Who are the men that were released? Hepner was arrested on charges of being the "Colonel" in the Kingsley murder plot. He was also director of one burning of the Workers' Camp. Hepner will also be remembered as one of three gentlemen who came to the Hudson Company to demand the discharge of John Bielak.

Martin was one of those arrested for directing a flogging and kidnapping expedition. This Martin was another one of the three who visited the Hudson Company.

Small wonder, then, that the Black terrorists flourished.

Finally, at a moment when the eyes of the entire country were on the horrors disclosed in Michigan, Attorney General Homer S. Cummings unblushingly issued a statement in which he admitted that he "had known of the Black Legion for about a year" but took no action because "no federal law was violated".

This was Cummings' answer to thousands of telegrams and letters from every part of the country calling for federal action against the Black Legion. Similarly Congress adjourned and ignored the Benson resolution.

Yet no resolutions or telegrams are required to get the forces of the government to chase after a Dillinger.

The Black Legion's already known criminal record put in the shade the acts of a hundred Dillingers. But what is still more serious, the Black Legion organizes the forces that are threatening the very existence of the United States as a republic. They are undercover Storm Troopers!

## VII.

### A NATIONAL MENACE

The Black Legion is not a purely Michigan phenomenon. It is a national menace and threatens the freedom of every American. Michigan, much cultivated by reaction, only bore the first fruits of Black Legionism.

The real parent of the Black Legion is the Liberty League, and that organization is nationwide.

The Black Legion spawns from the Red-baiting and false Americanism which are poured out daily through Hearst newspapers, Coughlin broadcasts, magazines such as *Liberty*, and films such as "Red Salute". This is a network that reaches into every town and hamlet.

The Republican Party has especially taken to supporting organizations such as the Black Legion, and as a result has given a new lease of life to many outfits with a similar program that operate in other states.

### Like Nazis—Like Legion

The Black Legion resembles closely the type of organization upon which fascism rode into power in Germany. The Nazi program was also founded on a war against Communists, Catholics, Jews, and other races and nationalities. Division of the people on religious or racial lines was necessary if resistance was to be broken down to a fascist dictatorship of the industrialists and bankers.

The Black Legion's acts of murder, burning of workers' camps, bombing of labor institutions, floggings, and anti-labor provocations are the American counterpart to the acts of the Nazi Storm Troopers. The Nazis, too, sent squads and "triggermen" to lie in wait in some dark alley for a labor organizer; or to crawl up to the home of a Communist, Socialist, Catholic or Jew, in the dead of night for an arson job. They employed the same cowardly, sneaky methods.

The Nazis, like the Black Legion, attracted with their appeal an element of morons and various types of degenerates. Those who



could not think for themselves but allowed themselves to be impressed as blind dupes, the cowardly, sadist types, were candidates for the Nazis, as for the Legion. A common performance in the Black Legion is to tie the victim to a tree in a position for a whipping, while black-robed knights of "Americanism" form a circle to delight in the show. They recruit the type that will jump at a chance to take part in a "necktie party".

Like the Nazis, the Black Legion has a military set-up. Each member is required to obtain arms. In fact, recruiting is concentrated among armed individuals—policemen, prison guards, rifle club members, sheriffs, National Guard officers, and various other police officials.

If given an opportunity to develop further, the Black Legion can advance to as strong a position as the Nazis held before they seized power, when they broke up workers' demonstrations and picket lines and came down like vandals upon workers' neighborhoods. Its propaganda can confuse masses of the least experienced workers.

#### Why No Federal Action?

Why doesn't the federal government take action? President Roosevelt has declared repeatedly that he opposes fascism. Why didn't the Democratic-controlled Congress and Senate pass the Benson resolution for a federal investigation?

The answer is clear. If the investigation were carried beyond Michigan it would reach into the Southern states where the K.K.K. is strong and where Roosevelt has his main base of support. Arising during an election year, the issue was simply shelved.

For that reason, United States Attorney General Cummings stated that "no federal laws were violated", despite the overwhelming evidence that the organization operated in several states and that its national headquarters was located in Ohio.

#### White-Robed Lynchers Vote Democratic

While trying to win the support of the workers and farmers with high-sounding phrases against fascism and "autocracy", Roosevelt will not take a single step against his white-robed lynch-ers in the South. This is why, though the Department of Justice

admitted that it knew of the Black Legion for over a year, not a move was made so much as to inform the people of Michigan of the great danger. The murder of Poole, and other murders that have been committed since that time, might have been forestalled.

The acts of the Black Legion were not the first test that confronted the Roosevelt administration. The issue was dodged when policemen and Klansmen of Tampa, of the Democratic state of Florida, kidnaped and flogged several Socialists. The leader, Joseph Shoemaker, was flogged to death. Appeals to the President brought no federal action.

In the state of Arkansas, where Democrats reign supreme, sharecroppers are kidnaped, beaten and run out of regions by organized vigilantes. Appeals to the President are cold-shouldered. General Hugh Johnson said he spoke in the name of the president when he openly incited California vigilantes to attack the striking marine workers.

Similarly, in Alabama, the nine Scottsboro boys are held for execution by a Democratic state government. Most lynchings take place in states where Roosevelt's party is in power. Governor Earle of Pennsylvania and other prominent Democrats issue statements about the Black Legion being Republican, but they close their eyes to their own back yards.

It is not the Roosevelt government that will turn back the fascist terrorists, but the organized forces of the workers, farmers and common people themselves. Such organized expression is the rising Farmer-Labor Party and the sweeping movement toward industrial unionism.

## FALSE AMERICANISM—ITS NEW HOOD

We have seen the work of the Black Legion. We have seen that it is an organization whose existence can under no circumstances be justified or tolerated. An organization that murders innocent people, that moves about secretly in the dark with hooded robes, that is compelled to shanghai its members and retain them by threat of assassination—such an organization is repugnant to everything that is progressive and genuinely American.

Yet there are those who, though not daring openly to favor the Black Legion because of the tremendous sentiment that has been aroused against it, have nevertheless found a way to defend it under cover, because they see in the Black Legion the very type of fascist organization that they themselves are aiming to establish. The cover under which they shamelessly defend this band of terrorists is false Americanism. These elements used every possible trick to play down the exposure of the Black Legion. They immediately tagged it a "cult". The aim was to picture the Legion as a sort of strange creation to be classed with Voodoos or some other peculiar worshippers. When this failed, they quickly swung over to the "old stand-by"—the Black Legion is against Communism.

First in this sinister game are the debased newspapers of William Randolph Hearst, who voices the sentiment of every reactionary and would-be fascist. The *Detroit Times* was the vanguard in this. Waiting until publicity on the Black Legion subsided, the *Times* suddenly jumped out with an eight column head over quotations from a sermon by a Reverend Savage of Pontiac, who was linked with the Black Legion early in the investigation. Parts of the sermon reported were as follows:

## Black Legion Gospel

"American patriots should organize to defy the terrible danger of Communism. As a result of the feeling that is being cleverly stirred by Communists, every anti-Communist is being eyed suspiciously as a member of the Black Legion.

"Innocent men are in jail, courageous men are being fired from

the police force, and an intelligent organization that was doing what the government was failing to do has been disrupted.

"A group of men who wanted to fight what the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church calls the 'world's greatest danger' found themselves mixed with others who wanted to fight other nationalities and other religions.

"Now why do so many citizens feel called upon to unite with such an organization? Do you realize that since Miss Perkins has been Secretary of Labor there have not been deportations of alien agitators? And why should she, when the government supports Commonwealth College, a Communist training school at Mena, Arkansas?

"Earl Browder, head of the Communist Party, in a platform given out last Sunday, advocates war and revolution [!!]. This same Earl Browder is also vice-president of the League Against War and Fascism." (*Detroit Times*, July 6, 1936.)

Reverend Frank Norris, the notorious tabernacle Red-baiter, who is often publicized by the Hearst papers, delivered a similar sermon on the following Sunday in Detroit.

## Gospel of the Manufacturers

But those were not the expressions of only these preachers of Black Legion gospel. Their sermons are the voice of the Michigan Manufacturers' Association. The line for their sermons was published over a month earlier, on the very week that the Black Legion took the headlines. The author is one Jacob Spolansky, a White-Guard Russian, notorious as an industrial spy organizer and an "expert" against Communists, employed by the Michigan Manufacturers' Association at that time. Significantly, it was during the week that the Black Legion was exposed that Spolansky found it opportune to issue a newspaper called *The Argus*. The paper, full of mysterious advertisements obviously serving only as receipts for donations from manufacturers, was devoted to defending the Black Legion. It was distributed among factory workers in large numbers.

The Black Legionnaires behind the bars did their part to help their defenders. They issued repeated statements against Communism and swore over and over that they were primarily an anti-Communist organization. Many claimed that they had been deceived as to the other parts of the Legion's program.

## "Last Refuge of a Scoundrel"

The old adage that "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel"



applies nowhere more strongly than to the defenders of the Black Legion. Their argument is that the Communists are the ones who are trying to upset the American Constitution. Therefore the vilest crime is justified in order to "save the Constitution".

It should also be pointed out that the Legion gets its definition of a Communist from the vile Hearst papers. By Communists they mean the labor and progressive movement as a whole—active unionists, liberals, progressive churchmen, and such. In fact, they even believe in Hearst's ballyhoo that Roosevelt and his brain trust are "Reds".

But the deeds of the Black Legion speak much louder than all their belated ravings to save themselves. It is the Black Legion that has been the violator of the constitutional rights of freedom of speech, press, and assemblage. It is the Black Legion that was brought into being to undermine the century-old traditions of American liberties.

#### The New Hood

The Legion's cry of Americanism is only another hood under which it conceals its anti-American intentions. The acts and the program, as expressed in the Legion's oath, have nothing in common with the Americanism of the founders of this country. The Black Legion carries forward the rotten reaction of the Tories, of the Benedict Arnolds, the Southern slave-owners, the killers of John Brown. It has brought its program and actions up to date to suit the requirements of the modern enslavers of the American people—the logical descendants of the Tory aristocrats—the du Ponts, Fords, Chryslers, Sloans, and their like.

The truth is that only the militant fighters in the labor movement can rightfully call themselves Americans. Only these elements carry forward the revolutionary traditions of the founders of America.

The founders of our country wanted us to be free and equal, but the Black Legion's program of race supremacy and Negro-baiting stinks of the slave market. Washington, Jefferson, Paine, Lincoln and such as they, hoped this country would always be free to all oppressed people, but the Black Legion wants to drive out all "aliens". One of the cardinal principles of true Americanism is freedom of worship and tolerance of all religions, but the Black

Legion has declared war on Catholics and Jews. The pride of every true American is that our country was one of the first to inscribe upon its banner the right of free speech, assemblage and press, but the Black Legion would take us back to the Middle Ages, as Hitler did in Germany, and has resorted to the vilest crimes to undermine movements not to its liking. It is not the Communists who stand for violence. It is the Legion that states in unmistakable terms in its oath that it will employ "guerilla methods" and violence "if necessary" to attain its aims.

The same cry of violence that is raised against Communists is raised against the unions. But it has been proved repeatedly that the only cause of violence is the armed thugs, strikebreakers, mobsters and Black Legions of the employers. The Communist Party gave a clear answer to this slander through its candidate for President, Earl Browder, who said in his report to the Party's recent Ninth Convention:

"The Communist Party must use the opportunity of this election campaign to smash once and for all the superstition, which has been embodied in a maze of court decisions having the force of law, that our Party is an advocate of force and violence, that it is subject to laws (Federal immigration laws, state 'criminal syndicalism' laws) directed against such advocacy. The Communist Party is not a conspirative organization, it is an open revolutionary party, continuing the traditions of 1776 and 1861; it is the only organization that is really entitled by its program and work to designate itself as 'sons and daughters of the American Revolution'. Communists are not anarchists, not terrorists. The Communist Party is a legal party and defends its legality. Prohibition of advocacy of force and violence does not apply to the Communist Party; it is properly applied only to the Black Legion, Ku Klux Klan and other fascist groupings, and to the strikebreaking agencies and the open-shop employers who use them against the working class, who are responsible for the terrible toll of violence which shames our country."

No! The Black Legion has nothing in common with Americanism. Neither has Hearst, or any of those who defend the terror-Legion. The Black Legion symbolizes those dark forces that are today threatening everything that is dear to an American.

What shall we do to scotch this Black Legion? What shall we do to drive out of existence all such organizations the country over? What can we do to safeguard the hard-gained civil liberties of the American people?

## STAMP OUT THE BLACK LEGION

The people of Michigan have long felt the black hand that was throttling their civil liberties. The climax was reached in the spring of 1935, when reactionary forces united to pass the Dunkel-Baldwin gag bill. The bill was a replica of the most sweeping of the criminal syndicalism laws that were passed in many states immediately after the war. It went as far as to declare guilty of a felony a landlord who rents a meeting place to an organization that "advocates the overthrow of the government by force and violence" and anyone who may possess any literature "advocating the overthrow . . ."

The labor organizations sounded the alarm. This bill was seen not only as an attack upon Communists but upon the entire labor movement. It was seen as a weapon with which to frame trade union leaders and all people who express progressive thoughts. It was generally agreed that the gagging of Communists is only a beginning to gagging the people of the United States. Almost overnight the forces of progress united. Among them were elements that for a long time fought each other bitterly. The Detroit Federation of Labor, and other central labor bodies, Communist Party, Socialist Party, numerous local unions, independent unions, Civil Liberties Union, fraternal organizations, the Farmers Union, the Methodist and other churches, liberal groups—in all 311 organizations that total a membership of almost a half million. They formed the Conference for Protection of Civil Rights.

### Two Armies Meet

On the other side of the battlefield combined the very same dark forces who a year later were found so intimately connected with the Black Legion. Foremost among them was former Governor Brucker.

The first big clash came when a hearing was arranged on the bill in the State Capitol. The forces of progress were there in a united front representing their respective organizations. Spokes-

men for the reactionaries were Brucker, a White-Guard Russian, representatives of committees on "subversive activities" from veteran organizations, and representatives of the Manufacturers' Association.

The state legislators were greatly alarmed at the rise of the people. They amended and toned down the bill. But the Conference for Protection of Civil Rights continued to arouse a still greater sentiment. Finally on the very last day of the legislature, when it was planned to railroad the bill through, there came a mass delegation of workers and farmers from all parts of Michigan. The gallery was full. The legislators became increasingly uneasy. Finally they put through a face-saving substitute with the teeth out. The bill was quietly shelved, and was not used for over a year after its passage. The reactionaries evidently recognize that they cannot do very much with it. The people of Michigan gained a partial but an important victory.

### "Vigilance Is the Price of Liberty"

Ever since, the Conference for Protection of Civil Rights has continued and has held together the many organizations. Its watchword has been "Vigilance is the Price of Liberty". For more than a year it has presented a people's front movement against every expression of reaction, and on many occasions has beaten the reactionaries back. One of its outstanding campaigns was the movement for the removal of Police Commissioner General Heinrich "Hitler" Pickert (as he is now known). It compiled affidavits, and brought together witnesses to back its petition, which listed a long series of crimes by the police department since the General took command. The bill of particulars recounted the killing of at least eight individuals by policemen on mere suspicion of crime, among them two 14-year-old boys; clubbing of strikers; the refusal to apprehend bombers of labor halls, who were, in fact, encouraged by the police; the banning of workers' films; the breaking up of meetings, etc., etc.

After months of effort to get a city council hearing on the petition, it was finally granted. Preceding that, however, the black forces were busy in the plants, offices, and government departments collecting signatures in Pickert's behalf. Their col-



lectors were foremen, officers of the American Legion, policemen and such.

### Same United Fronts

When the hearing came, again the two armies faced each other in the city council—the same united front of the people against the same reactionaries who gathered at the State Capitol. Detroit has not yet reached a point where a council will discharge its own police commissioner because the people demand it. But the commissioner came out of the situation greatly discredited. And this is a serious matter to a “little Hitler”.

Significantly, on the very day that the Council Chamber was the scene of these two armies, on May 22, the newspapers broke the story on the Poole murder and Black Legion. It immediately came to mind that here is the organization that has been menacing the rights of the people of Detroit for years, and that the police department has allowed them to do it freely.

The conference threw its united forces into a drive against the Black Legion. Thanks to its work much was uncovered and authorities were forced to conduct what fruitful investigation there was. The conference brought together a large committee of prominent leaders to back its demand for federal action.

### An Example to Be Followed

The work of the Conference for Protection of Civil Rights is an example of the type of action that must be carried on in every state and city in the United States. In most cities the American League Against War and Fascism expresses such united movement. The League, during its four years of existence, has been crowned with great success and rapid growth. Its affiliated organizations today count over two million members. In many parts of the country the League has as broad a representation as the Conference in Detroit. A significant feature of the League is that it is based on the understanding that fascism and war are twin dangers, that the very same sinister forces that endeavor to rob the people of their liberties plot to plunge them into a war. The Conference in Detroit has already taken an interest in the struggle against war, and a further development along that line can be expected.

In such manner, the people are awakening to the danger that faces America. But the fight for civil rights cannot be separated from the struggle of the working people for a happy America.

### Stop Landon!

An immediate task is to concentrate all strength to defeat the chief enemy of the common people, the Liberty League-Hearst-Republican combine. If their candidate, Alf Landon, wins, the reactionary organizations in the country will hold a field day. Like blood-hounds they will be let loose upon the unions and the farmers' organizations. The Republican open-shop administration of Michigan will be a pattern for the entire country.

The main forces against Black Legionism will come from the growing independent political movement of the workers and farmers—the Farmer-Labor Party and the organizations that support it. Unfortunately, a national Farmer-Labor ticket was not yet possible in 1936. But there is a nationwide campaign to elect Farmer-Labor candidates to Congress, and to state and local offices. In some instances there are independent labor tickets that have the backing of workers' and farmers' organizations. The Communist Party has declared its full support of all such candidates and put its own in the field only where there are none. In any case, only these candidates represent a genuine struggle against fascism. Their platforms call for suppression of the Black Legions and spy agencies, and for the full right to organize.

### Organize Industrial Unions!

But there is still another important task. To combat the forces of reaction, the workers need strong industrial unions in all mass production and basic industries such as automobile, steel, metal, mining, textile, and radio. It is precisely where these industries are centered that reaction reigns supreme and Black Legions grow. Only a powerful trade-union movement can defeat reaction in these parts. John L. Lewis, Chairman of the Committee for Industrial Organization; Francis Gorman, leader of the textile workers; Phillip Murray, director of the campaign to organize the steel workers, and other industrial-union leaders frankly stated at the Atlantic City convention of the American Federation of

Labor that the serious threat of fascism makes imperative rapid organization of the workers into powerful industrial unions. They pointed to what has happened to the labor movements of Germany, Italy and Austria.

A powerful steel workers' union, a powerful union of automobile workers, can ride like a giant caterpillar tank over the Black Legions, spy agencies and strikebreakers in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, West Virginia, Indiana, Illinois, and other states. Company towns would give way to a new day for the workers.

### Stamp Out "Red-Baiting" Poison!

Finally, if organizations of the Black Legion type are really to be rooted out, it is necessary to stamp out the poison propaganda of the patrioteers and Red-baiters. Their rantings through the yellow journals against the "Reds" and "aliens" have nothing in common with the interests of true Americans, and should be rejected everywhere. It is their poison that brings division into the workers' ranks through the color line in some unions. A trade union that excludes workers because of their membership in the Communist or Socialist Party is doing precisely what the labor-hating master-minds in the Black Legion would want it to do. Members of the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars, who allow themselves to be used against any workers' organizations, are similarly playing into the hands of those who conceived of the Black Legion.

What we have seen in the Black Legion is only an advance warning of the kind of people that may overrun the country like vandals. We have seen how Nazism sprouted in America. It is thrown up by the Ku Klux Klan, by strikebreaking vigilantes, industrial spies and by reactionary political circles. Their backers are the big industrialists and bankers united in the Liberty-League-Hearst-Republican combination.

This election campaign furnishes an opportunity for the American people to advance against the horrors of Black Legionism and to stamp out every outfit of its ilk. The central political issue of the day is the fight to maintain and extend the democratic rights of the people in the traditional spirit of true Americanism.

The true Americans will not be found among the top-hat

backers of Alf Landon. Neither are Father Charles E. Coughlin, Rev. Gerald Smith, heir to Huey Long's movement, Hearst, or any of these gentlemen who drape themselves in the American flag. These people defame Americanism only to conceal their attempts to destroy the last vestige of democratic rights.

The 1936 election should result in these elements being driven out of public life. The true Americans will be found in the very movements that have been the main target of these reactionaries—in the growing united movement of Communists, Socialists, progressive trade unions, farmers and middle class organizations. This people's front is advancing despite many obstacles. It is taking shape in the Farmer-Labor Party movement that has swept the country—and there could be no greater blow against reaction than a mighty vote for candidates of the Farmer-Labor Party or those who support such a party.



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